

**Samuel G. Smith to Andrew Jackson, February 6, 1835,
from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by
John Spencer Bassett.**

SAMUEL G. SMITH¹ TO JACKSON.

¹ Secretary of state for Tennessee.

Cherokee Agency, February 6, 1835.

Sir, I am aware you are annoyed with Correspondence from those who have no right to assume the privilege, but it seldom occurs with me.

Some time since the border settlers complained to Governor Carroll that danger was apprehended from the Cherokees. He instructed me to visit them and adjust the difficulties. I have been able to produce a reconciliation or at least get assurances from the Indians that no acts of violence will be committed and the whites have become quiet. In order to effect the object of my visit in a mild and conciliating manner I have traveled much through the nations and conversed freely with the Chiefs and head men. I have also extended my intercourse to the common Indians with a view to learn their situations and feelings in relation to their sentiments on the subject of removing west.

I had no just conception of things until ascertained from observation. The Indian population or those having membership as such are estimated at from 8000 to 12,000 and if there is a full blooded Cherokee in power I have not been able to find him. They are governed by those having the Cherokee blood in a remote degree.

The population of the whites in the entire nation who have settled in the boundary as citizens of the several states is now estimated at about 40,000 souls. The policy of

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Georgia, and recently since she has dispossessed those who were reservees under the Treaty of 1817 and 1819, is forcing the Indians into the chartered limits of Tennessee. This they are encouraged to do from the circumstances of the Circuit Judge of Tennessee having declared the law giving jurisdiction to the Country unconstitutional. Subsequent to the passage of the law and up to this time the whites have settled in this country within the chartered limits of Tennessee making about 5000 souls, thus by the moving of the Indians and whites to the same section of country produced the difficulties I have settled.

The obstinacy of a few chiefs stimulated by malcontent politicians exercising an undue influence upon the common Indians has had a destructive tendency upon the common Indians. They cannot subsist here much longer and many who had some influence and property are now feeling the effects of it also.

A very material revolution is going on in sentiment among them and they evidently indicate a subdued feeling. Some of those who are intelligent have informed me they must have something done, that they are not competent to become citizens and wish to go west. But I find many of those who have standing and entertaining such feelings prefer a treaty to the enrolments. They seem to look upon the enrolment as a provision for the common Indians and not for them. Should the Treaty making party continue to increase they must soon get the ascendancy. I took occasion to read Everets² speech on presenting Ridges petition and they seem to surrender the controversy. When Ridge and his party returned last summer they were charged with bribery for making a treaty, but the Ross party, many of them, now acknowledge the Treaty was made with an honest intention. I was informed confidentially that some two years since a distinguished Senator from New Jersey informed Judge Martin one of the Cherokee chiefs that there was no prospect of success for them on this Cherokee question; that he would not advise him what course to pursue but would advocate them in the Senate as long as they would persist. John Ross is obstinate and ambitious and has a powerful influence over the passions of the Common Indians but he is himself controlled by his brother Lewis Ross who is wealthy and is now realizing large profits by vending goods to them and has the Indians greatly in

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debt to him. He therefore is opposed to any arrangement. A delegation is about to leave for Washington, understood here to be divided two for Ross's party and one for Ridge's but I had an interview with them and they are all decidedly with Ridge and in favour of a treaty. Martin, one of the delegation, says his object is first to produce a reconciliation between Ross and Ridge both now at Washington and then prepare to offer terms to you for a Treaty. They say that it is necessary to prepare the feelings of the nation for a Treaty but this can be done by Ross, Martin and Taylor in a few days without difficulty.

2 Jan. 19, 1835, Edward Everett presented to the House of Representatives a memorial prepared by John Ridge for the Cherokees in Georgia, who had assembled at Running Water on Nov. 28, 1834, requesting means to remove west of the Mississippi. It was a regretful acceptance of the inevitable. Everett's speech coincided in these views. *Congressional Debates*, vol. XI., pt. 1., p. 1008.

The propositions they have in view are only to make professions of liberality and knowing they will be rejected with a hope to excite sympathy. They see the necessity of some steps and may ask large compensations but I have but little doubt something of the kind is in contemplation. Thus far Tennessee has not been excited but when she sees the Indians settling thick in her boundary and having a population of her own very clamorous on the subject I fear they will not remain quiet.

I am well aware that many difficulties present themselves, making some arrangement not liable to occur were they not within the limits of the several states. Finding things as they are and circumstances having suspended the business of immigration for the present I have advised Majr. Curry³ to go to Washington and disclose all things as at present situated. He cannot do it so well by [by] communication and to be present to answer inquiries may be some service. I have not informed him of my intention to write you. He is a most untiring officer and his whole devotion is the advancement of the object of the Government. In this he is very efficient. It is true he may be liable to excitement and sometimes charged with being harsh and some may charge him with exceeding his

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authority but in all my travels and enquiries I see nothing but what he was actuated to do from intense anxiety to remove the Indians. His course has produced much to effect the present subdued feeling in the nation. Should congress make a special appropriation to Ridge and others so that they imigrate it will be in all probability sending of the leaders of a party who may in a short time have the ascendancy. Of this however I do not pretend to give any opinion. I am inclined to think that if it should be deemed expedient that Colonel Richard M. Johnston of Kentucky and General Thomas Hinds of Mississippi would be the most suitable persons to negotiate with them. These gentlemen reside in states not bordering on the nation. There can be no prejudices towards them and their standing would be imposing. They have not been consel or lawyers in any of their controversies and should the Indians act unreasonable and obstinate these gentlement have the character to give effect to their statements. But I do not pretend to advise, it would be presumptious nor do I pretend to present them in opposition to any who may be applicants, not knowing that any have applyd but it will depend much upon the commissioners. These gentlemen can get all the information I presume that may be necessary. The only danger is that it might be an imposition.

3 See p. 288n., *ante*

The whole nation is surrounded with consel of some kind or other not always professing what they feel and design. I beg you Sir to excuse me for thus intruding upon you. I have nothing at stake, no individual interest nor have I had anything to do with the Indian relations except to know them historically.

My business at present offered an opportunity and I have been induced to examine minutely into whatever relates to them.

With the greatest respect